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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/830,645	12/03/2001	Kazunori Fukada	FUKADAI	1868
1444	7590	06/04/2004	EXAMINER	
BROWDY AND NEIMARK, P.L.L.C. 624 NINTH STREET, NW SUITE 300 WASHINGTON, DC 20001-5303			WILKINS III, HARRY D	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			1742	

DATE MAILED: 06/04/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	09/830,645	FUKADA, KAZUNORI
	Examiner	Art Unit
	Harry D Wilkins, III	1742

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 05 May 2004.
- 2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 1-19 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) 12 and 17-19 is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 1-11 and 13 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) 14-16 is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on 30 April 2001 is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 - a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)	4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)	Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.	5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
	6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

1. The objection to claim 1 has been withdrawn in view of Applicant's amendment

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. Claims 1-11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant's admission of prior art in view of Kojima et al (JP 55-041940) and "Plasma (Ion) Nitriding".

These claims are rejected for substantially the same reasons as stated in the previous rejection.

With respect to the amended features of claim 1, one of ordinary skill in the art would have expected the prior art nitrosulphurization process to produce a (relatively) uniform Vickers hardness across the entire surface of the parts to be hardened.

Therefore, one of ordinary skill in the art would have expected the plasma nitrosulphurization process to have produced a member such that any difference of Vickers hardness value between the mean value and either the maximum value or the minimum value is no greater than 100 as claimed.

4. Claim 13 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant's admission of prior art in view of Kojima et al (JP 55-041940) and "Plasma

(Ion) Nitriding" as applied above to claims 1-11 and further in view of Kramer et al (US 3,767,335).

This claim is rejected for the same reasons as stated in the previous rejection.

Allowable Subject Matter

5. Claims 14-16 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

6. Claims 12, 17, 18 and 19 are allowed.

7. The following is a statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter: the closest prior art, Kojima et al, teaches limiting the nitrosulphurization layer to 3-50 μm and specifically to limit the maximum thickness to achieve the improved abrasion resistance. Therefore, it would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have increased the thickness of the nitrosulphurization layer to 90 or 140 μm (0.09 or 0.14 mm) as claimed because Kojima et al expressly teaches away from increasing the thickness beyond 50 μm . Regarding claims 16 and 19, by requiring that the hardness decreases *continuously* from the surface to a depth of 0.14 mm, the claim requires that the total depth of the nitrosulphurization layer is 0.14mm, not that the hardness at that depth is lower than the hardness at the surface.

Response to Arguments

8. Applicant's arguments filed 5 May 2004 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Applicant argued that the feature that the minimum variation in Vickers hardness is below 100 is not taught by the prior art references.

In response, while this feature is not expressly taught by the prior art, one of ordinary skill in the art would have expected a nitrosulphurization process to inherently produce a (substantially) uniform hardness across the entire surface of the workpiece. If the process did *not* produce a uniform hardness across the surface, the reference would have described such a feature.

Conclusion

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Harry D Wilkins, III whose telephone number is 571-272-1251. The examiner can normally be reached on M-Th 10:30am-9:00pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Roy V King can be reached on 571-272-1244. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Harry D Wilkins, III
Examiner
Art Unit 1742

hdw

ROY KING
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 1700